

SUTHER PRAIRIE GERMPLASM

LITTLE BLUESTEM

Schizachyrium scoparium

Suther Prairie germplasm little bluestem was released in July 2002 by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Cape May Plant Materials Center (PMC) in Cape May Courthouse, New Jersey. It is recognized as a source identified release.

Suther Prairie germplasm little bluestem was collected from a wet prairie 27 miles Northeast of Charlotte in Cabarrus County, North Carolina. Cabarrus County is in the Piedmont of North Carolina in plant hardiness zone 7a and receives 45-55 inches of precipitation per year. The average temperature in July is 79° F and 42° F in January.

Description

Little bluestem is a native, long-lived, perennial warm-season, bunchgrass with coarse stems and basal leaves. It is easily mistaken for common broomsedge, which is lower in forage value. Little bluestem plants are 1½ to 5 feet tall, erect and slender to robust, with compressed stems. They have flat bluish basal shoots, which are somewhat bulbous at the bottom. Plants are green but are often purplish at the base of the stem and entire plants have reddish cast after frost. Leaves are nearly hairless except for a small tuft at the junction of sheath and blade and tend to fold with maturity. Seed heads are in the form of racemes about 3 inches long. The raceme stems are hairy. Little bluestem develops full stands where moisture is sufficient but gets clumpy on drier sites. It has value as a persistent low maintenance cover plant and as a summer forage plant.

Adaptation Suther Prairie germplasm little bluestem is recommended for planting throughout the southern Piedmont and upper Coastal Plain areas of the eastern United States.



Uses

Suther Prairie germplasm little bluestem can be used in several conservation practices, such as: critical area stabilization, conservation cover, field border, range seeding and pasture and hayland planting. Fertilization is recommended to improve forage quality. Plants should be grazed or hayed in the leafy stage before seed head emergence.



Grass seed drills equipped with specialized seed boxes are recommended for planting fluffy or "trashy" seed such as little bluestem.